

From the Acting Director

Happy Spring!

Some areas of the country have flowers blooming, other areas the trees are beginning to bud, and some of you are still trying to dig out from under the snow. However, Spring is here!

Spring is a time of renewal and celebration. In VAVS we take the time to celebrate and recognize our dedicated volunteers who have given over 13 million hours last year. Also, through their efforts, VA and our patients benefited from over \$42 million in gifts and donations.

National Volunteer Week is April 17—23. The 2005 theme is **"Inspire By Example"**. The theme reflects the power volunteers possess to inspire the people they help, as well as, to inspire others to serve!

I wish each of you success during your activities and look forward to hearing about your special events.

VA Voluntary Service, Central Office is pleased to recognize the volunteers that work here. We began accepting volunteers last October through the VET IT program. This program enables wounded soldiers from Walter Reed to benefit from the volunteer experience and gain work experience. There are currently sixteen volunteers who have donated over 1,000 hours of service in VA Central Office.

To quote Jim Mayer, VHA's Outreach Coordinator for the VA's Seamless Transition Office, "The Vet IT program is one of the most creative, effective, thinking-outside-the-box programs I've run across."

The VET IT program is receiving excellent publicity and is expected to grow in the coming months.

Mark your calendars to attend the 59th VAVS National Advisory Committee meeting in Scottsdale, Arizona. The meeting will be held May 24—28 at the Doubletree Paradise Valley Resort. I would like to express my gratitude to the staff and volunteers of the Phoenix VAVS program, Steve Moynihan of Minneapolis VAVS, and the VA Voluntary Service Central Office staff for their support and dedication during the planning of the meeting.

I look forward to seeing you in Scottsdale.

Laura B. Balun



The Eagle

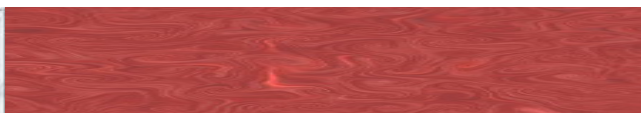
Voluntary Service Central Office Newsletter

Leaders in Volunteer Management

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National Youth Service Day

Spring is here, so it's time to make plans for National Youth Service Day, April 15-17. The event sponsored by State Farm, coordinated by Youth Service America, in partnership with PARADE Magazine and in association with the National Youth Leadership Council. Join the millions of young people across the country performing volunteer projects in areas ranging from assistance to tsunami victims, literacy, and the environment, to healthcare, hunger, and help for the elderly. Thousands of projects will be led by youth, schools, community, and faith-based groups. If you are no longer a young person, you can help a youngster organize a project. Please help spread the word about National Youth Service Day and the benefits youth gain from performing community service. Here are ways to get involved with NYSD at www.YSA.org/NYSD:

- Search and support local events in your area by viewing the 2005 NYSD U.S. State Planning Map
- Order National Youth Service Day T-shirts, Pens, Pencils, and Buttons
- Spread the word about registering NYSD projects

Disseminate free National Youth Service Day materials. Planning tool kits, service-learning curriculum guides, and posters are available in print and to download. Order free copies to disseminate to friends and family at:

<http://www.ysa.org/nysd/material/rfmform.cfm>.

The Planning Tool Kit is a comprehensive guide to help project planners identify projects, recruit volunteers, generate media attention, raise funds, and more. The Service-Learning Curriculum Guide contains eight lessons to

develop students' project management skills while planning projects for National Youth Service Day. Posters are colorful tools to recruit volunteers and decorate project sites. The back of the poster contains a guide for teachers and activity sheets for students.



One-day Volunteer Projects

*from The Volunteer Management Report
February 2005*

Having trouble coming up with something for episodic volunteers to do? Here are some projects that can be completed in less than a day:

1. Painting
2. Picking up trash
3. Data entry
4. Cleaning basement/storage room
5. Pulling weeds, planting, mowing
6. Repairing broken furniture
7. Distributing flyers/brochures
8. Washing windows
9. Cleaning carpets.



VA aide finds therapy in service

Walter Bryant, Birmingham News staff writer

Soft-spoken Alfonza Vassar can be seen all over the Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

For the past 19 years he has helped transport patients, deliver personal care packets, staff the hospital's library and brew and serve coffee in a small waiting area just off the Emergency Room.

And until it was taken out a few months ago, he operated a popcorn machine in the small, but busy room.

"I'm off the alcohol, and this is my therapy," said the 59-year-old Brighton resident who worked with missiles in the Air Force from 1963 until 1967, including a tour of duty in Saigon.

Along the line, alcohol got the best of him. He recovered, but realized he needed to find something constructive to keep himself busy. That's why he volunteers at the VA.

"You can go to all the schools and classes (for recovery), but it's up to you, with the help of the good Lord," he said.

Vassar speaks with the voice of experience when patients sit down and talk with him about the battles they fight with chemical dependency. He shares his life lesson about staying so busy doing constructive things that idleness and boredom don't become problems.

His way of staying busy is to leave home by 5:30 a.m. five days a week and ride two MAX buses to get to the hospital. Shortly after he arrives, the aroma of coffee begins filling the small waiting room. Vassar personally fills everyone's coffee cup to keep people from accidentally burning themselves on the hot brew.

Coffee is provided through cash donations various veterans' organizations make to the hospital. Some patients and visitors pay, and

others do not.

"If they leave a donation, we accept it," Vassar said.

By afternoon, coffee customers begin tapering off, and Vassar begins closing up shop.

He said he never takes vacation time and stays home only when the hospital observes holidays.

Several things about this volunteer make him a standout, says Patricia Fetzner, director of volunteer services at the hospital.

He gets to work by riding a MAX bus from Brighton to a central station in downtown Birmingham, where he transfers to a second bus.

"It amazes me," she said. "Some come here with little money, and it's good to provide this service."

VAVS Award for Excellence Recipient

Marty Martinez, Chief, Voluntary Service at the Las Vegas VA, has been selected as this year's recipient of the VAVS Award for Excellence.

Marty is a consummate professional and a leader in the Voluntary Service program.

The presentation of this award will be made at the VA Voluntary Service Annual National Advisory Committee (NAC) meeting. The meeting is set for May 25-28, 2005, in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Congratulations, Marty!



"When you are kind to others, it not only changes you, it changes the world."

Harold Kushner



Major League Umpire Jerry Lane visits with patients.

Visit us on the web: www.va.gov/volunteer

April

					1 April Fool's	2
3 Daylight Savings	4	5	6	7	8 Buddha(Bu) Maunday Thursday (C)	9 National Former POW Recogni- tion Day
	National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic—Snowmass, CO					
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18 National Health- care Volunteer Day	19	20	21 1st Day of Ridvan	22 Earth Day	23
		National Volunteer Week				
24 Wesak (B) Passover (J)	25	26	27 Administrative Assistant's Day	28	29	30

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